

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Please amend claims 1-13 and 15-16 and add new claims 17-20 as follows:

**LISTING OF CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) An equipment management system for managing equipment by an equipment management apparatus for acquiring management information from the equipment and a central management apparatus for centrally managing management information making packet data communication via a network over which a data processor is connected, the central management apparatus comprising:

a transmission controller for transmitting to the data processor, in advance of installing a new equipment management apparatus, packet data containing connection check data addressed to a newly installed equipment management apparatus,

the equipment management apparatus comprising:

a reception controller for acquiring the packet data containing the connection check data transmitted to the apparatus from the data processor before starting equipment management.

2. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein packet data containing the connection check data

further comprises destination information on the equipment management apparatus, and the equipment management apparatus further comprises a memory for storing the destination information on the central management apparatus.

3. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein packet data containing the connection check data further comprises initial setting information on the equipment management apparatus, and the equipment management apparatus further comprises an initial setting controller for providing initial settings relevant to the apparatus itself based on the initial setting information.

4. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein the equipment management apparatus further comprises a display controller for displaying predetermined information on a display device in response to acquisition of the connection check data by the reception controller.

5. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 4, wherein the display device is provided at an operating panel of equipment to be managed.

6. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein the central management apparatus further comprises an operating unit for registering information concerning an equipment management

apparatus newly installed, and the transmission controller transmits the packet data containing the connection check data to the data processor in response to registration of information concerning the equipment management apparatus newly installed.

7. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein communication between the equipment management apparatus and the central management apparatus can be made by means of a second communication system that differs from a packet data communication system, and the transmission controller determines type of system of communication with an equipment management apparatus newly installed, and, in the case where the communication system is the second communication system, the controller waits for reception of initial transmission data transmitted from the equipment management apparatus newly installed, and transmits connection check data.

8. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 7, wherein the second communication system is a communication system that utilizes a public telephone circuit network.

9. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein the network includes Internet.

10. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein equipment to be managed is an image forming apparatus for forming an image on a sheet.

11. (Currently Amended) An equipment management method for managing equipment by an equipment management apparatus for acquiring management information from equipment and a central management apparatus for centrally managing management information making packet data communication via a network over which a data processor is connected, the equipment management method comprising the steps of:

the central management apparatus transmitting to the data processor in advance of installing a new equipment management apparatus, packet data containing connection check data addressed to an equipment management apparatus which is newly installed;

the equipment management apparatus acquiring from the data processor, packet data containing the connection check data transmitted to the apparatus itself before starting equipment management; and

starting equipment management, after the connection check data has been normally acquired by the equipment management apparatus.

12. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management method according to claim 11, wherein the packet data containing the connection check data contains initial setting information on an equipment management apparatus newly installed, the equipment management method further comprising the step of

providing initial settings relevant to the equipment management apparatus based on the initial setting information.

13. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management method according to claim 11, further comprising the step of displaying predetermined information in a display device in response to acquisition of the connection check data by the equipment management apparatus.

14. (Original) An equipment management method for managing equipment by an equipment management apparatus for acquiring management information from equipment and a central management apparatus for centrally managing management information making communication in accordance with a first communication system or a second communication system, the equipment management method comprising the steps of:

registering information concerning an equipment management apparatus to be newly installed at the central management apparatus;

determining whether a communication system between the newly installed equipment management apparatus and the central management apparatus is a first communication system or a second communication system; and

in the case where the communication system is the first communication system, the central management apparatus transmitting connection check data addressed to the equipment management apparatus without receiving initial transmission data from the equipment management apparatus to be newly installed, and in the case where the communication system is the second communication

system, the central management apparatus transmitting the connection check data addressed to the equipment management apparatus in response to reception of the initial transmission data from the equipment management apparatus to be newly installed.

15. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management method according to claim 14, wherein the first communication system is a packet data communication system that utilizes Internet.

16. (Currently Amended) [[An]] The equipment management method according to claim 15, wherein the second communication system is a communication system that utilizes a public telephone circuit network.

17. (New) The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein the data processor is a mail server.

18. (New) The equipment management system according to claim 1, wherein the data processor is a server.

19. (New) The equipment management system according to claim 11, wherein the data processor is a mail server.

20. (New) The equipment management system according to claim 11, wherein the data processor is a server.